

## TOOL 12. HOW TO DEVELOP REGIONAL PROGRAMS

### INTRODUCTION

Many counties and communities, particularly those in rural areas, are joining together in a regional solid waste management planning effort. These regional approaches are being taken for the following reasons (Artz, 1990):

- To better manage the complexities of choosing, implementing and operating an integrated solid waste management system
- To achieve "economies of scale" with larger waste management facilities, and saving money as a result
- To share risk
- To reduce facility siting needs.

### WYOMING EXAMPLES OF REGIONALIZATION EFFORTS

By combining efforts and using one or two regional landfills versus many small rural landfills a financial savings can be realized by the solid waste authority.

A good example of this is demonstrated in both Fremont and Carbon Counties. In 1990, Fremont County determined the cost to operate 10 landfills throughout the county varied between \$17/ton and \$345/ton. Two of the small remote landfills with an operating budget of \$52,800/year were replaced with transfer stations which cost \$26,000 to set-up and \$37,500/year to operate. Fremont County is currently in the process of closing additional small landfills and constructing transfer stations to service those communities. Additionally, In October, 1995 many of the small landfills located on the Wind River Indian Reservation were closed and replaced by transfer stations.

The Town of Sinclair, in Carbon County was paying \$79/ton to operate its landfill. A cost

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analysis of options determined that if the town closed the landfill and hauled the waste to a larger landfill in the area (Rawlins landfill), the cost was reduced to \$53/ton.

These are just two examples of operating costs reduced through regionalization. When looking at the true and full cost to operate landfills many other things must be taken into consideration. (See Tool #8, Full Cost Accounting Methodology). The cost to close landfills and post-closure monitoring requirements are also included in the bottom line figure. The Town of Dubois has a 10 acre landfill they estimate will cost \$141,000 to close and another \$145,000 in post-closure costs. In the meantime, while they are paying for landfill closure and post-closure, they are also paying to dispose of daily wastes at some new facility. Campbell County estimates it will cost at least \$615,000 to close the 50 acre balefill and an additional \$260,000 in post-closure costs.

Establishing a regional solid waste management system may require the formation of a regional agency. The necessary powers of the agency might include the following (Artz, 1990):

- To operate or cause to be operated solid waste management services and facilities
- To enter into contracts
- To levy fees for payment of services
- To borrow money and issue evidence of indebtedness for the purpose of financing regional services and facilities
- To regulate the flow of solid waste to regional facilities.

Thoughtfulness and care should be taken when structuring a regional agency. In the past, regional agencies have been formed based upon need and ability to solve one or more problems. The type of agency selected should best fit the needs of the region. In Wyoming, there are a few options for forming regional solid waste agencies. These include: Solid Waste Disposal Districts; Joint Powers Authorities; Improvement and Service

- **When looking at the true and full cost to operate landfills many things must be taken into consideration.**

- **The type of regional agency should best fit the needs of the region.**



Districts and nonstatutory-types of agreements established between a public or private entity and some nearby area. Additionally, county commissioners can take regional (within county) solid waste actions without forming a separate agency. Examples of this include Lincoln and Park counties, where solid waste issues are handled directly by the county's board of commissioners.

Historically, another scenario includes setting up a regional agency for one aspect of solid waste management that does not include power in other areas. Examples of this include Sublette and Teton Counties. In both counties, a joint powers authority was created to govern the local recycling program while the landfill and transfer facilities are governed by the county commissioners.

Tables 12-1, 12-2 and 12-3 outline current regional solid waste agencies in Wyoming.

- A regional agency can be established for one aspect of SW management that does not include power in other areas of SWM.

| Name of Authority                    | Name of Solid Waste Disposal District |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Joint Powers Authority for Recycling | Lincoln County                        |
| Joint Powers Authority for Recycling | Park County                           |
| Joint Powers Authority for Recycling | Sublette County                       |
| Joint Powers Authority for Recycling | Teton County                          |
| Joint Powers Authority for Recycling | City of Cheyenne                      |
| Joint Powers Authority for Recycling | City of Laramie                       |
| Joint Powers Authority for Recycling | City of Casper                        |
| Joint Powers Authority for Recycling | City of Gillette                      |
| Joint Powers Authority for Recycling | City of Rock Springs                  |
| Joint Powers Authority for Recycling | City of Jackson                       |
| Joint Powers Authority for Recycling | City of Sheridan                      |

**Table 12-1**  
**SOLID WASTE DISPOSAL DISTRICTS**

| Name of Solid Waste Disposal District | Area Served  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Baggs SWDD                            | Baggs and 25 mile radius/Carbon County   |
| *Big Horn County SWDD                 | Entire county  |
| Central Weston County SWDD            | Town of Osage and rural central portion of county  |
| Eastern Laramie County SWDD           | Eastern Portion of Laramie County including Town of Burns  |
| Eden Valley SWDD                      | Towns of Farson, Eden and surrounding ranches  |
| Fremont County SWDD                   | Entire county  |
| Sweetwater County SWDD #1             | Rock Springs, Superior, Point-of-Rocks, Reliance and Bitter Creek                                |
| Sweetwater County SWDD #2             | Wamsutter, Baroil, Table Rock and Creston Junction   |
| *Sweetwater County SWDD #3            | Green River, Granger, Little America, McKinnon Area, Jamestown, outlying trona mines and ranches |
| Ten Sleep SWDD                        | Town of Ten Sleep and eastern Washakie County  |
| Upper Platte River SWDD               | Encampment, Saratoga, Riverside and a few housing subdivisions in Carbon County                  |
| Washakie County SWDD                  | Worland and western Washakie County  |

\* Currently have no mill levy for funding District

Source: Wyoming DEQ

**Table 12-2**  
**JOINT POWERS AUTHORITIES**

| Name of Authority                                | Entities that formed the Authority   |
|--|--|
| Joint Powers Recycling and Waste Reduction Board | Town of Jackson and Teton County   |
| High Country Joint Powers Board                  | Towns of Elk Mountain, Hanna, Medicine Bow and some surrounding unincorporated entities: Arlington, McFadden and Shirley Basin   |
| Salt Creek Joint Powers                          | Towns of Midwest and Edgerton  |
| Sublette Citizens for Recycling                  | Town of Pinedale and Sublette County   |
| City of Green River                              | The City of Green River, Wyoming has contract agreements with two separate entities in northeastern Utah. The first is a contract between the City and the Flaming Gorge Ranger District which includes the community of Dutch John, Utah. The contract, <i>Agreement for Access to the Use of Sanitary Landfill</i> , is renewed on an annual basis. The second contract is between the City and town of Manila, Utah, a Utah municipal corporation. This contract is also renewable on an annual basis. Note - there is no joint powers board for this authority - however, a joint powers agreement can be made without forming a joint powers board. |

Source: Wyoming DEQ



**Table 12-3**  
**REGIONAL NONSTATUTORY-TYPE AGREEMENTS**

| Entity Accepting Waste       | Type of Agreement  |
|------------------------------|--|
| TDS Trash Collection Service | This is currently the only privately owned and operated landfill in Wyoming. It is located in Torrington and has private contract agreements to accept wastes from some rural areas in Western Nebraska. |
| Lincoln County               | The Lincoln County landfill north of Thayne Wyoming accepts garbage from rural farming areas in southeastern Idaho. There are not formal contracts, these are verbal agreements.                         |

Source: Wyoming DEQ

## FUNDAMENTALS OF REGIONALIZATION

When Wyoming public officials, or any group of individuals, begin to consider regionalizing their solid waste programs—for any or all of the reasons mentioned earlier in this chapter—the type of regionalization structure should be based on which option best solves their current or anticipated future problems or maximizes on potential opportunities regarding solid waste.

### Examining Regionalization

The following steps should be considered when looking at regionalization:

- Formation of a regional working group to define the problems and opportunities of the region. This group should consist of a broad range of individuals interested in the management of solid waste and may include:
  - city/county solid waste engineers and planners
  - elected officials
  - landfill operators and managers
  - public works personnel
  - environmental staff from private industry

- The type of regionalization structure should solve current or future problems or maximize potential opportunities.

- volunteers involved in local recycling/composting groups
  - commercial haulers
  - recycling brokers
  - representatives from the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality
  - directors and members of associations like the Wyoming Solid Waste Management Association, Wyoming Recycling Association, Wyoming Association of Municipalities, Wyoming County Commissioners Association, Wyoming Rural Development Council and others.
- Define the area of the region; things to consider include:
    - political boundaries -municipal, county, districts and states
    - geographic boundaries (see section on Geographic Considerations)
    - current conditions in the region with regard to collection of solid waste, landfills, transfer facilities, recycling and composting centers.
  - Involve the Public—this cannot be overstated. Managing solid waste, at any level requires funding. The public is not likely to approve funding of solid waste activities if it is unaware or misinformed about what is going on. The public includes all citizens that may be affected by the solid waste planning. While it may not be possible to inform the public one-on-one, it is possible to use the following techniques to get the public involved or at least in-the-know:

- A regional working group should define the problems and opportunities of the region.

- Public involvement is critical to the success of SW management projects.



- Open forum meetings and public mass meetings with opportunity for input from the public
  - Presentations on regionalization efforts at meetings and luncheons of local clubs and civic groups like Kiwanis, Lion's Club, Rotary, Knight's of Columbus, League of Women Voters and others
  - Articles in local papers and community newsletters
  - Information on local radio and tv stations
  - One-on-one dissemination of information whenever possible - this one may be most important with involving elected officials and members of the public that may be opposed to the regional planning effort.
- Become familiar with both the pros and cons of regionalization - this will help with
    - 1) addressing concerns of the public and
    - 2) ultimately selecting the type of regional agency that can best address the problems and opportunities of the region.

### Selection of a Regional Agency

Table 12-4 outlines regionalization options for solid waste management in Wyoming. These options are not mutually exclusive. For example, one type of regionalization agency is the formation of a solid waste disposal district, another type is the joint powers authority. Two or more solid waste disposal districts have the ability to form a joint powers authority - therefore, one is not necessarily exclusive of the other.

### Geographic Considerations

Often times when conducting planning efforts for solid waste or other types of needed services, public officials plan within the political jurisdictions of their immediate area. This may result in missed opportunities with other entities facing similar problems. Additionally, some

- Public officials should become familiar with both the pros and cons of regionalization.

- Public officials that plan only within the political jurisdictions of their immediate area may miss planning opportunities with other entities facing similar problems.

neighboring entities may already have viable solutions but are never consulted.

Wyoming has distinct geographic areas, several encompassing multiple counties. There are also natural geographic areas extending into surrounding states, for example the southeastern corner of the state is the northern extension of the Denver-Julesburg geographic basin which extends well into Colorado. Northern portions of the Bighorn and Powder River Basins extend into Montana. For the most part, the marketing of recyclable materials has ignored political boundaries. This is out of necessity, in order to recycle collected materials it is necessary to ship to both regional processors and out-of-state markets. On the other hand, almost every municipality in Wyoming has at one time, had their own landfill.

In past times when landfills were less regulated and the cost to operate them was much less this was a viable option. However, in today's environment, the cost and liability of operating landfills may be best handled by regional efforts - this includes within counties, between counties and when possible, across state lines.

- Wyoming has distinct geographic areas which may encompass multiple counties or extend into surrounding states.



**Table 12-4**  
**REGIONAL PLANNING OPTIONS**

| Type of Agency                 | Wyoming Statutes                 | Summary of Features  | Comments   |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|--|
| Solid Waste Disposal Districts | 18-11- (101-105) and supplements | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Can include all or portions of a county</li> <li>•SWDD Board created by the County Commissioners</li> <li>•Ability to levy up to 3 mills of the assessed valuation of the District in order to pay for operations of the District</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Currently, the most widely implemented type of regional SW agency in Wyoming</li> <li>•Currently, most SWDD include portions of a single county</li> <li>•Assessing a mill levy requires a vote of the electorate, therefore public input process is essential in order to successfully pass a mill levy</li> <li>•If a mill levy passes it is then up to the County Commissioners to determine which portion of the 3 mills will be assessed, e.g. 1 mill, 1.5, 2, etc. and then notify the SWDD Board members</li> <li>•January 24, 1992 legal opinion from the Wyoming Attorney General states that SWDD have the authority to expend resources on recycling since landfilling and recycling of waste both constitute "disposal"</li> </ul> |
| Joint Powers                   | 16-1- (101-109) and supplements  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Joint Powers arrangement can encompass areas beyond municipal, county or state lines</li> <li>•Joint Powers Boards are created by the governing bodies of the participating agencies</li> <li>•Financing of projects include: contributions from one or more of the participating agencies; bond issues; revenue bonds; facilities privately owned and leased to two or more agencies; gifts donations or federal grants; State Farm Loan Board money</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•If city and county form a joint powers authority it may illustrate more credibility when approaching the State Farm Loan Board for funding</li> <li>•Two or more solid waste disposal districts can form a joint powers authority, however, they can only do jointly whatever they can do separately - in other words they do not gain more authority or power, they just have the same authority over a larger area</li> <li>•Joint Powers agreements can be made over state lines and with Native American Tribes - keep in mind that it requires a whole additional set of state laws</li> <li>•Currently, Joint Powers SW agreements in Wyoming include both incorporated and unincorporated areas</li> </ul>                              |

Source: Wyoming DEQ

**Table 12-4 continued**  
**REGIONAL PLANNING OPTIONS**

| Type of Agency                           | Wyoming Statutes                          | Summary of Features   | Comments   |
|--|---|---|--|
| Improvement and Service Districts        | 18-12-<br>(101-139)<br>and<br>supplements | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any <u>unincorporated</u> territory of the state can form an improvement and service district</li> <li>• File a petition with the county commissioners and pay a filing fee of \$200</li> <li>• Requires 60% of landowners holding at least 60% of the assessed value of the land within the defined boundaries of the improvement and service district in order for commissioners to review petition and set up a public hearing</li> <li>• If commissioners approve formation of a district then an election is held</li> <li>• Bond elections can have the formation of a district and a vote on the bond issue during the same election</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improvement and Service Districts statutes specifically include 'solid waste disposal' - however, this type of regionalization option has not historically been selected or implemented with regard to SW planning</li> </ul>   |
| County                                   | 18-3-<br>(501-524)<br>and<br>supplements  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• County commissioners have the authority to manage the solid waste within the boundaries of their respective county</li> <li>• County commissioners have the ability to work with other county commissions to manage solid waste within their region</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If two or more county commissions work together without forming a separate waste authority—it may slow down the decision making process when so many interests are involved</li> </ul>  |
| General nonstatutory-types of agreements | _____                                     | _____   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May be the simplest method of managing small amounts of wastes in remote and very rural areas—for example Lincoln County accepting wastes from some nearby ranches in Idaho or a Forest Service campground that only generates solid waste on a seasonal basis</li> <li>• Drawback to some informal agreements may be the lack of a legally binding contract should some later liability issue arise</li> </ul> |

Source: Wyoming DEQ